ENCOUNTERS WITH SCIENCE NO. 102 JANUARY 30, 1976
RHODA MAINES

DID COLONIAL HISTORIANS MISS SOMETHING?
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS ... ENCOUNTERS WITH SCIENCE... A WEEKLY REPORT ON THE WORK OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS. TODAY: DID COLONIAL HISTORIANS MISS SOMETHING?

VOICE:

AS THE UNITED STATES CELEBRATES ITS BICENTENNIAL, SCIENTISTS ARE TAKING A LONG LOOK INTO THE AMERICAN PAST, MUCH FURTHER BACK THAN TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO. IN AN OBJECTIVE SENSE, ACCORDING TO ONE HISTORIAN, HISTORY IS "ALL WE KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING MAN HAS EVER DONE, OR THOUGHT, OR HOPED, OR FELT." BUT HISTORY BOOKS ON THE U-S COLONIAL HERITAGE DON'T TELL ALL THAT. HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST DOCTOR MOREAU MAXWELL OF MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EXPLAINS WHY EXCAVATING SITES ON THE AMERICAN FRONTIER ADDS TO WRITTEN HISTORY.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- MAXWELL:

"THE METHODS AND TECHNIQUES THAT I USE ARE THOSE THAT DEAL DIRECTLY WITH THE MATERIALS IN THE GROUND, THAT ARE THERE. THEY ARE A FACT AND THEY HAVE TO BE INTERPRETED. AND LITTLE OF MY WORK IS ACTUALLY WITH DOCUMENTS. HOWEVER, OF COURSE, I USE DOCUMENTS IN ORDER TO SUBSTANTIATE THE INTERPRETATIONS I'M MAKING FROM THE DIGGINGS. I THINK THE HISTORIAN IS MUCH BETTER EQUIPPED AND TRAINED TO GO BACK THROUGH THESE DOCUMENTS AND RUN DOWN THESE CLUES THAN THE ARCHAEOLOGIST. ON THE OTHER HAND, I THINK THE ARCHAEOLOGIST IS MUCH BETTER EQUIPPED TO INTERPRET WHAT IS ACTUALLY THERE, WHAT IS BEING FOUND IN THE GROUND. AND SO THE MUTUAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO, I THINK, IS VERY FRUITFUL."

VOICE:

BELT BUCKLES, RINGS, AND SHOE BUCKLES RECOVERED IN THE NORTH AMERICAN GREAT LAKES AREA TELL HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS, LIKE DOCTOR MAXWELL, DETAILS ABOUT THE DAILY LIFE OF THE PERIOD.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- MAXWELL:

"WE HAVE BEEN WORKING AT FORT MICHILIMACKINAC NOW SINCE 1959. SIXTEEN YEARS OF WORK THERE, AND I WOULD SAY THAT WE HAVE RECOVERED AND CATALOGUED PROBABLY VERY CLOSE TO THREE-QUARTERS OF A MILLION OBJECTS. MUCH OF THIS IS NOW COMPUTERIZED. BY THE USE OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, WE'RE ABLE TO GET SOME IDEA OF WHAT THE PATTERN OF LIFE IS AND WHAT ARE THE UNUSUAL THINGS THAT ARE GOING ON. VERY OFTEN WE MAY FIND THAT BECAUSE OF STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, THE BASEMENT OF A HOUSE ISN'T REALLY THE BASEMENT OF THAT PARTICULAR HOUSE AS WE HAD THOUGHT...BUT THE BASEMENT OF A MUCH EARLIER HOUSE. AND THEN WE HAVE TO GO BACK AND EXCAVATE FARTHER OUT BEYOND THE CONFINES AND FIND THIS WALL OF THE EARLIER HOUSE, FOR INSTANCE. INSOFAR AS TRANSLATING THIS INTO WRITTEN HISTORY, I THINK IT'S NOT SO MUCH A CHRONICLING OF EVENTS AS YOU WOULD NORMALLY FIND IN HISTORY, BUT AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE A PICTURE OF THE DAILY LIFE AND THE KINDS OF DEPENDENCIES."

VOICE:

DOCTOR MAXWELL FEELS STRONGLY THAT IN TEACHING HISTORY THERE IS NOT ENOUGH EMPHASIS ON THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE PEOPLE OF THE TIMES STUDIED.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- MAXWELL:

"FOR EXAMPLE, IF YOU WERE WRITING A HISTORY OF THIS AREA, THIS PARTICULAR YEAR, I DOUBT VERY MUCH IF YOU WOULD START OUT BY SAYING WHAT YOU HAD FOR BREAKFAST AND WHAT KIND OF PLATE YOU ATE ON AND WHAT KIND OF SILVERWARE YOU USED AND SO FORTH AND SO ON. THE EVERY DAY ORDINARY ACTIVITY JUST NEVER GETS CHRONICLED, AND THIS PROBABLY IS AS GOOD A REASON FOR ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE HISTORIC PERIOD AS ANY OTHER."

VOICE:

IF A STUDY OF THE PAST HELPS TO EXPLAIN THE PRESENT, WE ASKED DOCTOR MAXWELL WHAT OUR REMAINS WILL TELL HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF THE FUTURE.

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- MAXWELL:

"I SOMETIMES THINK IN TERMS OF GOING OUT TO THE LOCAL DUMP...THE EARTHFILL TYPE OF DUMP, OF COURSE, WHERE THINGS HAVE SPREAD ON THE GROUND AND A BULLDOZER MOVES DIRT OVER THE TOP, AND THEN ANOTHER LAYER...THESE ARE GOING TO BE BEAUTIFULLY STRATIFIED. FOR EXAMPLE, WE OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO GO THROUGH THE ENTIRE STYLISTIC HISTORY OF THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY ON

THE BASIS OF RADIATOR ORNAMENTS AND HUBCAPS, ETC. WE OUGHT TO KNOW A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE BUYING HABITS OF PEOPLE FROM THE 1900'S THROUGH THE 2000'S. WE'LL LEARN, OR THE ARCHAEOLOGISTS OF SAY A THOUSAND YEARS FROM NOW, WILL LEARN A GREAT DEAL ABOUT OUR CIVILIZATION THAT ISN'T BEING PRESERVED IN WRITTEN FORM."

VOICE:

SCIENTISTS LIKE DOCTOR MAXWELL SEARCH THE PAST FOR MORE UNDERSTANDING OF THE AMERICAN HERITAGE.

ANNCR:

THIS HAS BEEN ENCOUNTERS WITH SCIENCE...A REPORT ON THE WORK OF AMERICAN SCIENTISTS. YOU HEARD TODAY: DID COLONIAL HISTORIANS MISS SOMETHING? THIS PROGRAM WAS PRODUCED IN COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION.

RJM/LD/PY